

The Quran states emphatically that the method of conversion through compulsion is wrong and should never be practiced. Allah says in Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow): *There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the Right Way from (the way of) error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way; for God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2:256)*

Compulsion necessitates conversion, and conversion necessitates exploitation. All of these methods are contrary to the teachings of Islam. Freedom of religion is one of the foundations of Islam. Accordingly, Christians and Jews flourished and prospered in the Muslim lands throughout the history of Islam.

VII. ASSASSINATION

The idea of the assassination of innocent people is totally against the teachings of Islam. Islam does not agree or allow any person to follow the method of killing others because of personal differences. To have differences among people is a sign of vitality, dynamism, and a healthy atmosphere. When one person kills another, it is as if he has killed all of mankind. In this regard, Allah (swt) says in the Quran in Surah Al-Ma'idah:

'Because of this did We ordain unto the children of Israel that, if anyone slays a human - unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading corruption on earth - it shall be as though he did slay all of mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he saved the lives of all mankind. (5:32)'

In Islam, anyone who kills an innocent person should have capital punishment imposed upon him and he should pay a ransom to the family of the deceased.

VIII. REVOLUTION

A military Coup d'Etat is against the teachings of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) never caused a coup in his entire life. It took him thirteen years in

Mecca to make a social change in the society, from paganism into a God-fearing one.

The "revolution" that the Prophet (pbuh) brought about was through evolution. He worked very hard in order to change the personality and character of individuals and of the society. The Prophet (pbuh) brought about change socially, culturally, morally, religiously, educationally, and politically.

When people became ready to live and practice the change that was brought to them, the new system was ready to take over, both privately and publicly. One great example of this is when the Muslims took over Mecca without any war. After the Muslims peacefully took over Mecca, Islam spread all over Arabia and, eventually, throughout the world.

IX. FUNDAMENTALISM

There is no fundamentalism in Islam. If fundamentalism means, "to follow the fundamental teachings of Islam," then every Muslim is a fundamentalist. But, to be dogmatic, radical, and evangelic is against the teachings of Islam. Islam condemns all types of extremism. On the other hand, Islam teaches its followers to act as shock absorbers to most of the activities in life. Otherwise, they are the losers in this world and in the Hereafter.

X. ISLAM

The name of this religion is Islam. The root of this word comes from the Arabic words "Silm" and "Salaam," which mean "peace." "Salaam" may also mean "greeting one another with peace." One of the beautiful names of God is "The Peaceful." This means much more than just peaceful. It means submission to the One God and to live in peace with the Creator, within one's self, with all other people, and with the environment. Thus, Islam is a total system of life. A Muslim is supposed to live in peace and harmony in all of these aspects of life. So, a Muslim is any person in the world whose obedience, allegiance, and loyalty are to God, the Lord of the Universe.

Some of the major principles of Islam are: the Oneness of God, the Oneness of Mankind, the Oneness of Prophets and Messengers, the Day of Judgment, the innocence of man at birth, state and religion, angels, love and respect for all people of other religions, and many more.

Muslims rely mainly on the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the last Prophet sent to mankind. The five pillars of Islam are: Shahada (Oath of Faith), Salat (Prayer), Siyam (Fasting), Zakat (Purifying Tax), and Hajj (Pilgrimage). They do have two festivities and feasts. They use the solar and lunar calendars for their religious practices. Their place of worship is called a Masjid. They have three holy and sacred Masjids: the Ka'bah in Mecca, Masjid of the Prophet in Madina, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. They observe rules and regulations in their diet.

Muslims respect their parents, women, elders, and teachers. They practice morality and consider family values one of the most important parts of their lives. They strive to live in peace with all peoples of the world, irrespective of color, nationality, creed, or religion because all are creatures of God

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WHAT ISLAM SAYS ABOUT

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

I. JIHAD

Jihad is an Arabic word whose root is "Jahada," which means, "to strive for a better way of life." Other nouns are Juhd, Mujahid, Jihad, and Ijtihad. Other meanings are: endeavor, strain, exertion, effort, diligence, and fighting to defend one's life, land, and religion.

The highest degree of Jihad in Islam is when a person struggles against himself to change himself. He should not allow himself to commit any type of crime, assault, or ill act against the law, the society, or the environment. A Muslim who has already submitted himself and his loyalty to God, the Creator of the Universe, has to try his best to control his ego, his lusts, and his selfishness. He should be humble, amicable, and friendly to all, irrespective of color, nationality, ethnic background, gender, language, creed, position, or religion. A Muslim is a person who walks and behaves like an angel on this planet. He is to take care of the poor, the needy, those who have no jobs, and those who are homeless. He is to sacrifice his time, money, knowledge, wisdom, efforts, energy, and all other capacities in order to please God Almighty and help people live in peace and harmony among themselves. This is considered in the Book of God as a True Jihad.

Anyone who makes Jihad against himself is to be rewarded by God in this world and the Hereafter. One has to make sure that, while he is making Jihad against himself, his intention should be for the love of God and for the sake of making people happy, healthy, and safe. He should never brag about his sacrifices and he should never exploit people; otherwise, he will be the loser in this world and in the Hereafter.

PS: For more references, one may read the Quran (3:142) (22:78) (29:6) (29:69)

Jihad is not a war to force one's belief or faith on others, as some people may think. It should never be interpreted as a tool of compulsion to make others believe the same way one believes.

Islam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping, and hijacking during peace and war, when carried out against civilians. Whoever commits such violations is considered a murderer and is to be punished by the Islamic State. During war, Islam prohibits Muslim soldiers from harming civilians, women, children, the elderly, and religious men, like priests and rabbis. It also prohibits cutting down trees and destroying structures.

II. HOLY WAR

The term "Holy War" is not Islamic terminology. The only Holy One is God, the Creator. His Words are Holy. As far as war is concerned, there is nothing in the Quran, or even in the teachings of Islam, that indicates that Muslims should wage a war at all. Moreover, it is against the teachings of Islam to practice what is called "Holy War." This action is not at all from Islam. It is borrowed terminology from the Crusades.

During the Crusades, the Romans used this terminology and applied it in action. They considered the local people in the Middle East to be infidels. It so happened that these people were Christian and Muslim Arabs. Even the Christians did not accept the Crusaders as their leaders. Hence, the Romans had to get the verdict and blessings of the Pope to wage a tragic war against the Middle Eastern people.

In order to raise enough money to buy ammunition, they started selling croissants in their local churches. They thought that the croissant was the symbol for Muslims, i.e., crescent and star. This was not true, of course. Muslims do not worship the moon. They worship Allah (swt) alone. Muslims use both the lunar and solar calendars in their religious services. Their pledge of allegiance is only to Allah (swt), the Creator of the whole universe.

At that time, the Crusades killed 200,000 local people in the Middle East. Similarly, one can say that the Spanish Inquisition was carried out by the Francos against the local Muslims, Christians, and Jews. They killed 10 million Muslims and 4,000 Jews. Those acts of terrorism were done in the

name of their religion. However, Jesus was innocent of their terror, and Christianity and other Christians of the world are innocent of their crimes and atrocities. It should be stated here that the local Christians of present times have nothing to do with the Crusades or the Inquisition. No one is to be blamed for someone else's mistake in past history.

Islam is against Holy War. It is against killing innocent people. The Quran stipulates, "Whoever kills one person, it will be as if he killed all of mankind. And whoever saves the life of one person, it will be as if he saved the lives of all mankind." Moreover, if someone tries to create a commotion, disturbance, or hate among people in order to start a war, this person is committing a huge sin that is much larger and more serious than killing all of mankind. Therefore, Muslims try to live in peace and harmony with all people, without exception.

III. TERRORISM

The word "terrorism" is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as:

- A. Government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power. In France, during the French Revolution, 1789-94.
- B. General: A policy intended to strike with terror those against whom it is adopted; the employment of methods of intimidating; the fact of terrorizing or condition of being terrorized.

The word "terrorist" is defined as:

- A. Politically: applied to the Jacobins and their agents and partisans in the French Revolution, especially to those connected with the revolutionary tribunals during the "Reign of Terror" (The year of 1795 was known as the Reign of Terror during which time people were kept in subjection to severity).
- B. Dyslogistically: One who entertains, professes, or tries to awaken or spread a feeling of terror or alarm.

Islam and all other religions of the world are against terrorism. So, one has to recognize that a Muslim is that person who submits himself to God, in peace. He tries his best to live in peace within

himself, with his family, with his neighbors, and with the society at large. No one has the right to scare others or to insult, accuse, or even spread rumors against any member of the society. Muslims welcome non-Muslims into their homes, societies, and countries. They respect Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and all other religions. They encourage people to create dialogue among each other, to find commonalities, and to live in peace and harmony with each other. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said, "All people of the world are members of the family of God. The best one is the one who goes out of his way to help everyone with love, respect, and honor."

IV. FANATICISM

Fanaticism does not exist in Islam, and Islam is against those who are fanatics. The tradition of Islam is meant to be simple, easy to apply, realistic, and practical. Islam is built on glad tidings, rather than warnings. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent two of his ambassadors to Yemen, with the message of glad tidings, to present Islam in a simple way and to make it easy for all people.

V. EXTREMISM

Muslims are neither vocal nor reactionary. They are neither radicals nor fanatics. They cannot be intimidated. They are not dormant, nor are they to accept any injustice inflicted upon them or upon any other human being. They are not to accept extreme spiritual involvement or extreme material indulgence. They are appointed to be a middle nation. In this respect, Allah says in the Quran, in Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow): *Thus We have appointed you a middle community that you may witness against mankind, and that the Messenger may be a witness against you. (2:143).*

VI. COMPULSION

In Islam, there is NO compulsion in religion. The idea of forcing or compelling people to accept one's religion is totally against the teachings of Islam.